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SOCIAL WORK AND CIVIL SERVICE IN MASSACHUSETTS

A Thesis

Submitted by

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(A.B., Wellesley College, 1938)

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596

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
I	Introduction	1
II	The Merit System	5
III	Public Social Work in Massachusetts	5
IV	History of Civil Service in Massachusetts	10
V	Present Civil Service Organization in Massachusetts	12
VI	Selection of Social Workers in Massachusetts	19
VII	Protection of Employee and Employer	33
VIII	Comparison of Personnel Practices in Public and Private Social Work in Massachusetts	43
IX	Comparison of Public Social Work in Massachusetts with that of Other States	53
X	Pertinent Matters in 1943	62
XI	Conclusions	70



TABLES

<u>NUMBER</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
I	Social Work Examinations in Massachusetts State Service - 1942	24
II	Social Work Examinations in Massachusetts State Service - 1941	25
III	Percentages of Veterans Appointed to Social Work Positions in Massachusetts State Service	37
IV	Salaries of Case Workers in 54 Private Agencies of Boston in 1942	47
V	Salaries of Sub-Executives in 59 Private Agencies of Boston in 1942	48
VI	Salaries of Certain Social Work Positions in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts	49
VII	Educational Qualifications of Certain Groups of Public Social Workers	54





## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Social work is now a major function of government and is generally accepted as such. Strangely enough, it is often social workers who have the greatest difficulty accepting social work as a government function, as they feel that the public social worker is less free to do good social work than the private worker.<sup>1</sup> Just as social workers outside of the public welfare field are often suspicious of public welfare in general, so do they often question the employment standards in public welfare. They often feel that appointments are unfair and are politically influenced, that requirements are too low, or that written examinations cannot select the qualities needed in a social worker. In some cases these accusations are true, and in some they are false. The purpose of this paper is to consider and answer these questions about public social work in Massachusetts. Since employment standards in public social work in Massachusetts are inextricably tied up with the civil service system, this paper really has two parallel interests, social work and civil service. An effort will be made to relate the two and to show the application of civil service to social work and to show how social work fits into the civil service system. Some attempt will be made to compare Massachusetts

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1. Alice C. Klein, Civil Service and Social Work, pp. 240-1.



standards with those of other states and to compare public standards in Massachusetts with the standards of private agencies in the same state. Of necessity, the scope of the paper will be limited in its detailed study to state positions, but some general information will be included on application of civil service to local public welfare.



## CHAPTER II

### The Merit System

Years of experience with the spoils system has led most of the states to adopt the merit system. Elizabeth Cosgrove, Senior Examiner of the United States Civil Service Commission, describes the merit system as follows:

The merit system as we know it to-day is an integrated system for selecting and retaining qualified personnel for public positions. It uses selection techniques developed in specialized fields. The merit system aims to establish its service on the mutual confidence of personnel agency and operating agency in each other's skill and integrity.<sup>1</sup>

The original purpose of a merit system was to fight the spoils system and remove the appointing power from politics. The stress in early days was on protection of the employees by providing fair competition for positions and permanency of tenure for the winners. Now, however, there is a changing philosophy and many merit system agencies go beyond this original purpose and try to select the best available personnel to fill positions; their stress is not only on fair competition, but on devices that will actually sift out the best people. Klein describes some of the attributes of the civil service agencies with the protective function uppermost and those with a high standard of personnel uppermost. According to her, the former are secretive about their work, for example consulting

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1. Elizabeth Cosgrove, "The Merit System in Public Welfare Administration," The Compass, Oct., 1940, pp. 3-5, 14-16.





specialists privately for fear of leakage or collusion; they have low entrance requirements on the theory that everyone has a right to compete for public positions; eligibility lists remain good for a long time; the appointing officers have little choice; and residence requirements are rigid. In the latter, Klein says, wide use is made of professional services in consultation; entrance requirements are realistically related to the job because the public has a right to able service; lists are short-lived so that only the best are appointed; appointing officers have latitude in selecting; residence requirements are flexible.<sup>2</sup> It will be interesting to see how these criteria apply to the Massachusetts system.

The terms civil service and merit system are usually used interchangeably, although their original meanings were very different. Civil service originally (and it is still used this way) referred to the whole body of persons employed in the non-military executive and administrative branches of government. Merit system was originally the term for a system of appointing public employees on a basis of merit rather than politics.<sup>3</sup> In this paper the term merit system will be used to refer to the general method of appointing and employing people by merit, while the term civil service will be used in referring specifically to the Massachusetts system since this is the term used in this state.

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2. Klein, op.cit., pp. 34-9.

3. Ibid., p. 34.





### CHAPTER III

#### Public Social Work in Massachusetts

Because of its very purpose, public social work must differ in many ways from private social work. In the first place, public social work is controlled by law. Positions are filled by law just as services are given to clients in accordance with law. This means that methods of hiring, discharging, and remunerating workers are fixed by law and must, of necessity, be less flexible than in private social work. Standards, when once set, are more rigid than standards in private work. Likewise, as changes occur slowly in the law, and as there are many people to be satisfied, standards rise more slowly than in the private field.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts apparently has no official definition of social work, and perhaps such a definition is unnecessary, as there seem to be no laws or rules relating to social work as a whole. In the classification system of the Division of Personnel and Standardization each position has a separate title and definition and all titles in the social welfare field are grouped together in "Health and Welfare Services" with a subheading, "Social Welfare Group". Many of the positions in this group are not social work positions; for example, home economist, cost of living investigator, and inspector of infirmaries are included.<sup>1</sup> Evidently

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1. Commonwealth of Mass., Alphabetical List of Titles and Salary Rates for the Personal Service of the Commonwealth, Division of Personnel and Standardization of Dept. of Administration and Finance, corrected to July 25, 1940 (no page numbers).



this lack of definition is not unusual, as Dorothy Kahn says in an article in the Compass:

The first problem that confronts us in this field is that of recognizing and identifying social work positions. I can find no attempt anywhere to define what these are, although there are literally hundreds which have been identified, labelled, and subjected to the most detailed scrutiny.

She herself offers this definition:

A social work position is one in which a substantial part of the worker's activity consists of direct contact with individuals or groups in situations which call for an understanding of human behavior and the exercise of judgment in extending or withholding a social service or benefit.<sup>2</sup>

In Massachusetts social work is carried on by both the state and local governments with a certain amount of supervision exercised by the state over local work. The direct social work conducted by the state is more specialized than that carried on by the cities and towns. The municipalities carry the greatest amount of relief, while the state does more service work through state hospitals, child guidance clinics, parole system and prisons.

There are a number of different departments of the Commonwealth carrying on social work. The Department of Public Welfare, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Correction, the Department of Education, the Department of Mental Health, and the Department of Aid and Pensions all employ social workers. The Department of Public Welfare, with its several institutions and divisions of Child Guardianship, Juvenile Training, Aid and Relief, employs the largest number of social workers. The Department

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2. Dorothy Kahn, "Social Work and Civil Service," The Compass, Oct., 1940.





of Public Health has social workers in clinics, crippled children's work, and other forms of public health work. The Department of Correction employs social workers in the prisons, while the Department of Mental Health carries on social work in state hospitals and child guidance clinics. The Department of Education has social workers in the Division of the Blind, the Division of Immigration, and the Division of Rehabilitation. There is a great variety of social work titles in the state of Massachusetts, including Social Worker, various grades of Social Work Supervisors, Psychiatric Social Workers, Workers with the Blind, Settlement Agents and Investigators, Welfare Appeals Referees, and many others. Titles are listed and defined by the Division of Personnel and Standardization of the Department of Administration and Finance.<sup>2</sup>

Some titles are listed by classes and some by groups or classes. Social Worker is a title of a group or classes with "typical classes in the group" such as Social Worker in Americanization, Social Worker in Child Guardianship, Social Worker with Older Boys, Social Worker in Correction, etc. On the other hand, most positions are listed only by classes, such as Worker with the Blind, Psychiatric Social Worker, etc. Positions with the same title may vary a great deal from one department to another, so that the position of Social Worker in one department may actually be a medical social work position, while in another the work may consist of investigating settlements and determining eligibility for relief. According to Klein, a good test of a classification system is "whether all positions

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5. See infra, Chapter VI, for further discussion of classification.



in a given class can be filled from the same employment list or register," but in Massachusetts separate examinations are held for different departments as needs arise. (However, eligible lists may be substituted at the discretion of the Director of Civil Service and the appointing officer.)

In some instances there seem to be several titles for the same type of work. For example, Public Health Social Work Supervisor, Supervisor of Medical Social Work, Social Worker in Public Health, and Supervisor of Social Work in Public Health are all medical social work jobs, yet their titles show no relationship and one wonders if it is a matter of choice that determines which title will be applied to a particular vacancy. Some of these positions are listed in the Public Health Field Work Group, while some are listed under the Social Welfare Group. Likewise, the group of classes called Social Worker has a title Social Worker with the Blind, while in a separate classification there is a title Worker with the Blind with apparently similar functions. Also in the Social Worker group there is a title Social Worker with Older Boys, while elsewhere there is a title Visitor and Guardian to Older Boys. Actually many of the titles listed are not used and classification is "descriptive rather than restrictive."<sup>4</sup> At present no one is employed as a Social Worker in the Division of the Blind or with older boys because the titles Worker with the Blind and Visitor and Guardian to Older Boys are used respectively. One wonders what determines whether a person is appointed as a Social Worker with Older Boys at \$1440 or as Visitor and Guardian at \$1800.

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4. Alphabetical List of Titles and Salary Rates for the Personal Service of the Commonwealth





It is obvious that the classification system has been very carefully thought out and well planned. It is also fairly obvious that jobs were classified after they had been in existence many years. This, of course, made the classification realistic, but it also permitted inconsistencies which had existed before and were now crystallized. The question arises whether the classification system which is "descriptive rather than restrictive" is too flexible. It would seem logical to expect a classification system to be restrictive to the extent of limiting the variety of positions with the same title, and, conversely, the variety of titles for similar positions. There should be no possibility of two persons' doing the same job at different salaries; nor should persons with entirely different types of responsibilities have the same title and salary.



## CHAPTER IV

### History of Civil Service in Massachusetts

On June 3, 1884, Governor Robinson signed the first Massachusetts Civil Service Act, the second such act in the country. At this time there were many civil service reform groups centering around Boston, and these groups gave strong leadership to the nationwide movement for more efficient government service.<sup>1</sup>

There have been many warring factors in the history of Massachusetts civil service. There have been the reform groups, the various pressure groups such as organized veterans, and organized employees interested in their own advancement and protection; there have been the governors who, in general, seem to have contributed toward progress; there have been the legislators who have often succumbed to political pressure; and there have been the Civil Service Commissioners who, in general, have been intelligent, capable people, but not trained personnel administrators.<sup>2</sup>

From 1884 the law remained fairly static until, in 1937, there was widespread dissatisfaction with the civil service organization in Massachusetts. At this time the first survey of the system since 1884 was initiated. A commission known as the Special Commission on Taxation and Public Expenditure made a thorough study and recommended a number of changes. In

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1. George C.S. Benson, Civil Service Administration in Massachusetts, p. 2.

2. Ibid., pp. 4-15.



1939 many of these recommendations, as well as those of a special recess commission, led to a basic reorganization.<sup>5</sup> The present civil service organization will be described in the next Chapter.

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5. George M. Cook, "Massachusetts Civil Service System". Paper read before Annual Conference on Current Government Problems, Massachusetts State College, Oct. 31 - Nov. 1, 1941.



## CHAPTER V

### Present Civil Service Organization in Massachusetts

Private organizations and industries have personnel departments which are responsible for appointing, maintaining and discharging employees. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts this responsibility is always shared by three agencies, the Division of Civil Service of the Department of Civil Service and Registration, the Division of Personnel and Standardization of the Department of Administration and Finance, and the operating department concerned in making a particular appointment. The Division of Civil Service is largely a recruiting and standard-setting agency; it establishes conditions under which employees may be appointed, maintained in office, and discharged or promoted. The Division of Personnel and Standardization classifies all positions according to duties and salaries, regulates salaries, and authorizes payrolls. The operating departments have the authority to appoint, promote and discharge employees in accordance with law and the regulations of the Division of Civil Service and the Division of Personnel and Standardization. Thus three departments must be satisfied every time a new position is created or even an old one filled. The operating department sends a requisition to the Division of Standardization, which then sends an authorization to the appointing department and the Civil Service Division authorizing examination and appointment. This, of course, provides a system of checks and balances, but may also mean







duplication and confusion, as Standardization describes jobs it knows little about and Civil Service prepares examinations and sets qualifications for jobs someone else has defined. Requirements for positions are determined by the operating department and Civil Service Division together. The operating department has major responsibility for determining qualifications according to the duties of the position, but the qualifications must be approved by Civil Service.

According to law, the Division of Civil Service shall be under the supervision and control of a Director of Civil Service, who shall be the executive and administrative head of the Division, and a five member commission to be known as the Civil Service Commission. The commissioners are appointed by the governor and paid on a per diem basis when working. At least two of the members must belong to the minority party. The Director is appointed by the Commission and must be chosen by one of two methods: from the three top candidates on a nation-wide competitive examination conducted by a qualified special committee, or without examination by a four-fifths vote of the Commission. He holds office during good behavior, and can be removed only after a public hearing by a four-fifths vote of the Commission. According to law, he must be a person familiar with the principles and experienced in the methods and practices of personnel administration.<sup>1</sup> The present Director, the first serving under this system, is Ulysses J. Lupien, whose past experience has been in the field of labor relations.

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1. Mass. G.L., Ch. 13, s. 2 (Amended 1939, Ch. 238).



Civil service procedures are closely controlled by the Legislature, and many of the most minute details are prescribed by law. In accordance with the principle of committee organization used in the Legislature, there is a legislative committee on civil service (a joint committee of both houses) which considers and holds public hearings on all bills related to civil service.

The Civil Service Division itself has various functions carried out by several bureaus, such as the application bureau, the examination bureau, the certification bureau. Examinations are conducted entirely by the Civil Service Division's Examination Bureau. The Director has the authority to designate persons outside of or in the official service of the Commonwealth to act as examiners of applicants for any public employment.<sup>2</sup> These specialists are appointed by the Director to prepare and grade examinations and to grade the qualifications of experience and training.<sup>3</sup> The examinations must be practical and "relate to matters which will fairly test the fitness of the applicants to perform the duties of the positions for which they apply." Oral examinations are not permitted, though an appointing officer may interview a certified applicant; these oral interviews do not count in the examination grade.<sup>4</sup> The special examiners have great freedom in setting of standards for scoring qualifications and in preparing examinations.<sup>5</sup> In Massachusetts little weeding out is done before the examinations, even though there are entrance requirements. It

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2. Mass. G.L., Ch. 13, s. 6 (Amended 1939, Ch. 238).

3. Max Weinberger, Examiner, Examination Bureau, Division of Civil Service, interview.

4. Mass. G.L., Ch. 31, s. 10 (Amended 1939, Ch. 238 and 498).

5. Mr. Max Weinberger.



is considered too expensive to examine qualifications of all applicants at this time, so a person without qualifications, instead of being barred from the examination, simply does not pass it.<sup>6</sup> When the examinations are graded, a list is made up by the Application Bureau, listing names in order of rank, and the three top names (four names for two positions, five names for three positions, etc.)<sup>7</sup> are certified for appointment by the Certification Bureau. The appointing officer then appoints one of the certified names.<sup>8</sup> A list is in force two years unless extended by the Director.<sup>9</sup>

Written competitive examinations must be held for most positions in the official service, though in certain cases discretion is allowed the Director. For example, if an examination has been held and no list established, a written qualifying examination may be held for a particular person, usually the provisional appointee. According to law, if there is no eligible list from which to fill a vacancy, the Director or Civil Service may authorize the appointing official to make a provisional appointment. This provisional appointment may last for three months and may be renewed for an additional three months. The Director must, during this period, hold an examination and establish a list.<sup>10</sup> Provisional employment cannot be counted as experience in applying for a Civil Service examination.<sup>11</sup> If a position not under Civil Service is placed under it, the Director or Civil Service, supported by a four-fifths vote of the Commission, may rule

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6. M. Phillebrown, Application Bureau, Division of Civil Service, interview.

7. Commonwealth of Mass., Civil Service Rules, Rule 16.

8. Ibid., Rule 13.

9. Ibid., Rule 12.

10. Mass. G.L., Ch. 51, s. 15 (Amended 1939 and 1941).

11. This statement appears on examination announcements.





that incumbents passing qualifying examinations shall retain their positions; this is usually done.

Promotion is an important matter in any civil service jurisdiction interested in developing a career service. In Massachusetts, appointment to positions beyond entrance grade is, as far as possible, filled by promotion. An appointing officer may, with the approval of the Director, promote an employee to the next higher grade if the employee has been in the lower grade three years and is one of the three oldest in length of service and if he passes a qualifying examination. Otherwise, promotion shall be made after a competitive, promotional examination open to the next lower grades in succession until a sufficient number of applicants is found. If a list of at least two cannot be secured this way, an open competitive examination may be held.<sup>12</sup>

According to Klein, the basic requirement for personnel administration is position classification or analysis and allocation of individual positions into groups or classes on the basis of similarity of duties and responsibilities.<sup>13</sup> The Massachusetts law on this subject is:

All appointive offices and positions in the government or the Commonwealth (except judicial and legislative branches) shall be classified by the Division of Personnel and Standardization, subject to the approval of Governor and Council, in services, groups and grades, according to the duties pertaining to each office or position. Classification must be established by specifications defining for each grade, the titles, duties, and responsibilities and minimum qualifications for entrance and promotion.<sup>14</sup>

Positions are fitted into classes according to the duties of the jobs and classes are then grouped into groups of classes. In Massachusetts,

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12. Mass. G.L., Ch. 51, s. 15 (Amended 1939, Ch. 238 and 506; 1941, Ch. 491).

13. Klein, op.cit., p. 86.

14. Mass. G.L., Ch. 50, s. 45.





classification is performed, not by the Civil Service Division as in most other states, but, as has already been indicated, by the Division of Personnel and Standardization in the Department of Administration and Finance. The original reason for this was that classification also includes salary setting. The responsibility of the Division of Personnel and Standardization is to define classes in order to distinguish them from others, to determine salaries, and to control the payroll.<sup>15</sup>

It is difficult to comprehend at once the relationship between the Civil Service Division and the Division of Standardization. Briefly, according to the report of the Special Commission of 1937, Civil Service is concerned with selection and promotion, while Standardization is concerned with classification and compensation. Civil Service is responsible for certain groups of state and local employees, while Standardization is responsible for all state employees, whether they are under Civil Service or not. Thus, Civil Service has jurisdiction over many local employees not affected by Standardization, and Standardization has jurisdiction over many state employees not affected by Civil Service.<sup>16</sup> The Division of Civil Service has set up its own classification plan for employees of towns and cities. The Commission in 1937 recommended co-ordination of the two departments. George Cook, former Assistant Executive Secretary of the Massachusetts Civic League, remarked in an article that it is surprising that the system works as well as it does.<sup>17</sup>

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15. T. J. Grehan, Assistant Director of Division of Personnel and Standardization, personal interview.

16. Report of Special Commission on Taxation and Public Expenditure, Part XV, The Civil Service System of the Commonwealth, Section II, p. 12.

17. George Cook, op.cit.



The Massachusetts system is unusual in that state and local civil service are under one jurisdiction. According to law, the civil service system applies to all cities and to all towns of over twelve thousand which vote to accept it.<sup>18</sup> In 1959, only four towns had voted to participate,<sup>19</sup> but an interesting development has recently brought all employees having anything to do with Old Age Assistance or Aid to Dependent Children under Civil Service. The Social Security Board requires that all employees handling Federal funds be employed under a merit system so that most local public welfare workers, as well as clerical help, are now employed in accordance with Civil Service laws.<sup>20</sup>

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18. Mass. G.L., Ch. 31, s. 47

19. Cook, op.cit.

20. Infra, Ch. X.



## CHAPTER VI

Selection of Social Workers  
in Massachusetts

All social workers employed by the Commonwealth are appointed according to Civil Service procedures. This means that all permanent workers have, with few exceptions, passed at least one open competitive examination and possibly one or more non-competitive promotional examinations or competitive promotional examinations. All social workers in cities and in towns that have accepted the Civil Service system are also under Civil Service, as are all social workers in towns handling Aid to Dependent Children or Old Age Assistance.

One of the fundamental jobs of a merit system department is recruiting of employees. According to Klein, recruitment by effective methods and for qualified people is an important factor affecting the status of social work under a merit system. During the years when the primary function of a merit system was elimination of special privilege and assurance of fair competition for the masses, recruitment was limited to wide dissemination of examination announcements, but the problem changes when the goal is securing, developing and retaining skilled workers. Klein declares that the more specialized employees should be recruited by the operating departments. Methods suggested for social workers are announcements in schools of social work and in professional associations and individual con-<sup>1</sup>

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1. Klein, op.cit., p. 78.





tacts. The chief method of recruiting in Massachusetts is wide distribution of examination posters and newspaper announcements. The operating departments ordinarily do no recruiting. Occasionally, when it is impossible to establish a list, an operating department may recruit its own workers, who will then be given qualifying examinations; this is very rare, however.<sup>2</sup>

Examinations seem important to candidates and examiners, but entrance requirements and grading of background are as important or more important in setting a professional standard in social work. According to Klein, entrance requirements for a position should be related to the duties of that position.<sup>3</sup> Most writers seem to assume that there will be educational requirements for social work positions. Yet in Massachusetts, as in Ohio and Connecticut, the law declares:

No rule or regulation shall be made setting up educational requirements as a condition of taking a Civil Service examination except in respect to professional and other positions for which such requirements are expressly imposed by statute and to the extent of the requirements so imposed.<sup>4</sup>

The theory behind this is that everyone should have an equal chance to compete for public employment, but it raises the interesting question of which is more important, equality for all or good public service. However, there are ways of circumventing the law on education, and these methods are used in the interest of high professional standards. One method is to allow substitution of education for experience. In many of the social work positions a certain amount of experience is required, and education may

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2. Major L. Haworth, Assistant to Director of Civil Service, personal interview.

3. Klein, op.cit., p. 289.

4. Mass. G.L., Ch. 31, s. 6A.





often be substituted for experience. This, of course, contrary to usual personnel practice, has the effect of making education seem second best, and almost makes a candidate feel apologetic for his education. Another method of avoiding the effects of this law is to give credit for education in grading qualifications. Although there may be no educational requirement as a condition for taking the examinations, credit may nevertheless be given for education just as credit may be given for experience beyond the required amount. Besides jeopardizing professional standards of work, the law against educational requirements causes a great deal of unnecessary expense to the state. Examiners are paid for each examination they correct, and, since many people take examinations without the necessary knowledge and with little chance of success, this money is wasted. The proposal of the Recess Commission for examination fees is one way of meeting this aspect of the problem.

Probably even more important than entrance requirements is the evaluation of education and experience. In most of the examinations in Massachusetts, the weighting is experience and education two, and practical questions (the examination) three. The final grade on which a Civil Service list is based is a combination of examination grade and experience and education grade. For every examination the examiner must prepare a table for evaluating education and experience, allowing varying numbers of points for each item. For example, each year of college and graduate school may carry a certain number of points and likewise each year of experience may carry a certain number. In the so-called Merit System Examination given in 1941 to bring all Aid to Dependent Children and Old Age Assistance workers



into Civil Service, two points were allowed for each year of college and eight points for a Master's degree in social work, with varying numbers of points in between.<sup>5</sup> No distinction is ordinarily made between accredited and non-accredited schools and colleges because there are a number of colleges licensed by the state that are not officially recognized by any accrediting organization.<sup>6</sup>

Evaluation of experience does not always seem completely clear, as no attempt is made to evaluate the quality of the experience. No distinction is made between agencies with high standards and those with low standards, nor is the caliber of a person's work taken into consideration in grading. There is no definition of such terms as "agency adhering to acceptable standards," "trained medical social worker," etc. Usually, any paid experience is accepted. Recently, an examination required a certain number of years of "paid experience", but did not designate full-time experience. Many people took the examination who had done part-time work or volunteer work with small token payments, and, when they appealed to the Commission because their experience was not accepted, the Commission voted to accept it. Since then, care has been taken to use the word "full-time".<sup>7</sup> Ways of evaluating experience and education vary from year to year as each examiner is free to set his own standards and to interpret them as he wishes. Instructions given to an examiner give him rules for preparing an experience rating which he is required to submit, but he has complete leeway in determining content.<sup>8</sup> Very recently, the Department of Public Welfare and the

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5. Grading Sheet for Merit System Examination.

6. Max Weinberger.

7. Ibid.

8. Division of Civil Service, Instructions to Examiners.





Classification Bureau of the Division of Civil Service have prepared a new classification system, including requirements, for local social work positions (those handling Old Age Assistance and Aid to Dependent Children), which it is hoped will establish uniformity in these positions.<sup>9</sup>

Examinations in social work, as in all other fields, are conducted by the Examination Bureau of the Division of Civil Service. In social work the Director appoints a person (or persons) well known in social work to prepare the examination, grade the papers, and grade the qualifications. The names of these specialists are a carefully guarded secret, but, according to Mr. Lupien, they are people recognized in the social work field, public or private.

In 1942 nine social work examinations were held for state positions, five open competitive, three promotional, and one qualifying promotional. The following table shows the number of people who took and passed the various examinations (page 24).

In 1941, also, nine examinations were held, six open, one promotional, one qualifying promotional, and one non-competitive qualifying. Table II shows the results. (Page 25.)

The Special Commission on Taxation and Public Expenditure of 1937 pointed out the high percentage of failures on examinations. In 1936 8,470 out of 27,187 applicants passed examinations, while in 1937 twelve out of 121 passed an examination for welfare investigator.<sup>10</sup>

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9. Flora Burton, Supervisor of Social Service, Division of Aid and Relief, interview.

10. Commonwealth of Mass., Report of Special Commission on Taxation and Public Expenditure, 1938, p. 23. (op.cit.)





TABLE ISocial Work Examinations in Massachusetts State Service - 1942<sup>a</sup>

Type of Examination	Date	Title of Examination	Number Examined	Number Passed
Open competitive	1/10	Social Worker, State Aid and Pensions	142	23
	2/21	Senior Worker with Blind	41	25
	3/21	Investigator of Settlement and Support	115	18
	8/12	Head Social Worker, Public Welfare	44	28
	8/21	Supervisor, Public Welfare Statistics	14	5
Promotional	1/31	Welfare Appeals Referee	51	34
	4/18	Psychiatric Social Worker, Prison Colony	10	8
	5/23	Head Social Worker, Women's Reformatory	4	3
Qualifying promotional	7/10	Senior Worker with the Blind	—	—
Total numbers examined and passed			421 <sup>b</sup>	144

a Source: Compiled from Monthly Reports of the Director of Civil Service, 1942.

b Numbers taking and passing qualifying examinations not included.



TABLE IISocial Work Examinations in Massachusetts State Service - 1941<sup>a</sup>

Type of Examination	Date	Title or Examination	Number Examined	Number Passed
Open competi- tive	2/15	Visitor and Guardian to Older Boys	609	226
	7/10	Psychiatric Social Worker, state- wide	22	10
	8/5	Assistant Psychiatric Social Worker Boston State Hospital	43	10
	9/20	Public Health Social Work Supervisor	12	6
	9/20	Social Worker, Public Health	11	5
	11/29	Assistant Director, Division of Child Guardianship	36	4
Promotional	4/17	Supervisor of Social Service, Public Welfare	8	7
Qualifying promotional	10/4	District Supervisor, Public Welfare	1	1
Non-competitive qualifying	11/29	Social Worker, Public Welfare	5	—
Total			741 <sup>b</sup>	267

a Source: Compiled from Monthly Reports of the Director of Civil Service, 1941.

b Numbers taking and passing qualifying examinations not included.



It would be extremely interesting to know whether the examinations choose the right people, those with the best training and experience and personality qualifications. The usual way of testing this is by studies of validity, and according to Klein studies of validity should be made on all examinations.<sup>11</sup> No such studies are made in Massachusetts, and there are no specialists on the techniques of testing on the staff of the Civil Service Division. When the author questioned one of the examiners in the Division, he said quite frankly that they do not know whether or not the examinations are selecting the best people.

The type of examination is entirely up to the special examiner, the only restriction being that the subject matter must be directly related to the position.<sup>12</sup> Some of the examinations are entirely objective, short answer type of examinations, while others include essay-type questions. There seems to be stress on definitions and factual knowledge, which is not surprising, since these are easier to test than attitudes and personality traits or methods of working with people. When the author asked the same examiner quoted above how they judge these qualities, he replied, "We assume those."

It may be interesting to study some of the individual examinations along with the duties of the positions, the requirements, and the results of the examinations. The examination with the highest requirements of those studied by this author was that for Social Worker and Social Work Supervisor in the Department of Public Health, given September 20, 1941.

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11. Klein, op.cit., p. 319.

12. Instructions to Examiners, op.cit.





One examination was given, with social workers and social work supervisors answering some of the same questions and some separate ones. Both of these positions were medical social work jobs involving work with patients, families of patients, other social workers, and physicians. One questions the title supervisor since, according to the descriptions, the supervisor's position involved no more actual supervision than that of the social worker; both seemed to be case work positions. Both seemed to require the same type of knowledge, such as understanding of medical case work, understanding of social factors in illness, knowledge of community relationships, etc. Qualifications for the social worker were three years of experience in the last seven in social case work, including one year in a social service department of a hospital or clinic under a qualified medical social worker. Education in an accredited school of social work could be substituted for experience year for year up to two years. The supervisor's position required four years of experience in the last five in medical social work in a recognized social service department of a hospital or clinic, one year of which must have been under supervision of a qualified medical social worker, and one year of which may have been in a public medical care program (it is unusual to distinguish between public and private agencies). Graduation from an accredited course in medical social work may be substituted for two years of experience. According to these requirements and substitutions, a person with educational qualifications is less well off in regard to filling requirements than a person with experience and no education. Actually, an applicant with six years of education beyond high school (college and graduate school) can receive credit for only two years of experience. A candidate with graduate training in social work must



spend seven years to secure credit for three years of experience for the social worker's examination and eight years for four years of experience for the supervisor's examination. A candidate with college training but without social work training receives no credit for education and again must spend seven years for three years credit and eight years for four years credit for the social worker's and supervisor's examinations, respectively. Although it is undoubtedly true that education cannot be entirely substituted for experience, it seems to this writer that some recognition should be given to education that will make a person eligible for further professional training. A person with a high school diploma and three or four years of experience is not eligible for professional social work training, while a college graduate can always secure further specialized training. In giving no credit for college training and stressing experience so far ahead of education, the Division of Civil Service seems to be overlooking this fact.<sup>15</sup>

Examinations for both social worker and supervisor required two sessions, over five hours for the supervisor's examination and four and one-half for the social worker's. There was little distinction between the types of questions in the two examinations, though there were a few questions on supervision in the supervisor's examination. The examination was entirely objective, made up only of multiple choice questions. The questions covered a wide range of topics, laws, public health, social problems, social resources, medical information, and case work. Of all the examinations this author has looked at, these two were the most comprehensive

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15. All quoted material in this Chapter is from examinations and examination announcements of the Division of Civil Service, except as noted.





(they were the only ones with two sessions) and the qualifications were of the highest professional caliber.

On February 21, 1942, an examination was given for Senior Worker with the Blind. The duties were to determine eligibility and need for assistance to the blind, to assist the blind to utilize the community resources, and to promote welfare services for the blind. Required knowledge included knowledge of special problems of the blind, of social and economic problems, individual and group behavior, health problems, especially of the blind, and principles and methods of case work. Candidates must have had two years in the last five of satisfactory, full-time, paid professional employment in a social case work capacity in a public or private social agency adhering to acceptable standards. Substitutions were not very clear, as the terms "full time graduate study in a professionally recognized school of social work," "professionally recognized undergraduate school of social work," "two years of full time training in a professionally recognized school of social work for which a certificate was granted," were all used; however, practically any form of education a person might offer was considered here. The examination contained mostly specific questions on the blind. There were some on relief and interviewing and on community resources. Some questions were purely factual, while others gave a chance to show understanding of practical and emotional problems.

In April, 1942 a promotional examination was given for psychiatric social worker at the State Prison Colony. Psychiatric social work is usually considered a fairly specialized branch of social work, and one of the Civil Service examiners told this author that an ordinary social worker





could not pass an examination for psychiatric social worker because the examinations are so specialized.<sup>14</sup> Yet this examination was open only to permanent senior correction officers at the prison. These correction officers were responsible for keeping watch on the walls and at the gates, or might be in charge of a section of the prison, and the examination for correction officer has no requirements of experience or education. The step from correction officer to psychiatric social worker certainly does not seem very logical. The duties of the position consisted of interviewing inmates, planning and carrying out investigations of cases, recording and filing information obtained, preparation of transfer and parole summaries, case histories, and statistical studies, advising the administration on treatment of inmates, and establishing contacts with the Social Service Index, parole board, and social agencies. It was necessary to have knowledge of sentencing and releasing procedures, certain legal matters, psychology, settlement laws, etc. The examination contained questions on psychiatry, case work, legal terms, penology, summaries, and case histories. There were ten questions, including essay questions and definitions with stress on psychiatric and legal definitions and on summaries and case histories. Ten people took this examination, and eight passed. It is interesting to compare the duties described in the classification of the position of Psychiatric Social Worker with those listed on the poster for this examination. According to the classification, the duties consist of:

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14. It is necessary to discriminate between "special examiners" called upon to prepare and grade examinations in specialized fields and the people employed regularly by the Examination Bureau of the Civil Service Division with the title "Examiner".



the more important social case work in connection with the care and treatment of psychiatric patients or inmates of state institutions, or investigations involving determination of mental conditions of individuals either as to need for institutional care or adjustment to the community.

One cannot help wondering if the title, Psychiatric Social Worker, was given instead of, for example, Social Worker, in order to be able to pay the higher salary of the psychiatric social worker.

In 1941 an examination was given for assistant psychiatric social worker for a vacancy at the Boston State Hospital. Here the duties described conformed to those in the classification book, but here too there were no qualifications stated. The questions were all essay type. There was a question on dementia praecox, a case involving use of community resources, a question on inheritance of mental disease and helping a patient's family understand this, and one on the basic principles of case work. There was a question on what the applicant felt would constitute the training and qualifications desirable for the position sought. This seemed to be a very unfair question, as each applicant would naturally be limited by his own qualifications and would probably describe as desirable the qualifications which he felt that he himself possessed.

Examinations for Investigator of Settlement and Support Claims, Welfare Appeals Referee, and Social Worker in State Aid and Pensions all had no entrance requirements and contained only factual and legal questions.

There seems to be little uniformity in standards from one examination to another. For example, the positions of Social Worker in State Aid and Pensions and in Public Health have the same title and carry the same salary, but the difference in requirements is conspicuous. Senior Worker with the Blind carries a higher salary than Social Worker in Public Health, but the



latter has a higher experience requirement. Whereas the position of Worker with the Blind is open to recent graduates or schools of social work (by means of substitutions of education for experience), the Social Worker in Public Health must have one year of experience beyond that. On the other hand, for the position of Worker with the Blind applicants were permitted to count undergraduate education as substitutes. Psychiatric Social Worker starts at a higher salary than Social Worker, yet the position at the State Prison Colony had no requirements at all. The position of Social Worker in State Aid and Pensions has the same salary as others with the title Social Worker and is in the same group of classes, but requirements and type of examination are very different from some of the others in the same group. From these observations two conclusions are obvious: there are wide discrepancies among the positions in the group of classes known as Social Worker, and there is wide variation in requirements and type of examination from one examination to the next for the same position. One person may be appointed to a position according to certain standards, and a year later another person may be appointed to the same position according to entirely different standards.





## CHAPTER VII

### Protection of Employee and Employer

The merit system has always been protective, originally protective of the employees and now protective of the public service as well. The examinations are, of course, a protection for both employees and state, but some of the other forms of protection more clearly favor one group, often at the expense of the other.

The most effective methods of protecting the public service are strict entrance requirements and careful grading of qualifications, proper use of a probationary period, and use of a service rating system. Entrance requirements and qualifications have already been discussed in Chapter VI and it has been pointed out that they vary from one examination to the next and that the Civil Service Division has been inclined to err more in the direction of leniency than over-strictness. According to law, there is a six month probationary period for all new workers before their appointments become final, but this probationary period is almost never used. Another important form of protection for the state is a method of service rating, and this, too, is not used in Massachusetts. Probation period and service rating really go together, as without one the other is worth very little. Because there is no service rating, there is no objective evidence on which to utilize the probation period. Likewise, because there are no service ratings very few employees are ever dismissed or denied salary increases for poor work; dismissals or denials of salary increases are usually due



to flagrant misconduct (such as excessive use of alcohol) rather than inefficient work.<sup>1</sup> There is, perhaps, a first step toward service ratings in the termination notice which is filled out when a person leaves the state (or city or town) employ, temporarily or permanently, for any reason. This notice calls for a very brief evaluation of the employee from the appointing authority, and it is sent to the Division of Civil Service. The information requested is very superficial, but this may lead to development of a real service rating system. According to Civil Service rules, the Director of Civil Service may at any time ask appointing officers to submit reports on the work of employees.<sup>2</sup>

As has been mentioned before, all positions in upper grades must be filled by promotion if there are at least three people in the next lower grade. This is, of course, a way of promoting a career service and attracting ambitious young people into the lower grades. On the other hand, such a system will not attract mature experienced people from other fields. This may mean that the majority of people in high positions will be people who have had experience only in the same type of work they are now doing, whereas people who have had experience in private agencies, for example, might have a great deal to contribute to the public welfare field.

However, during the past two years there have been several open competitive examinations for high positions, so this apparently is not a problem at present. Lines of promotion are not standardized, and for each promotion the Director of Civil Service may determine which grades are

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1. Flora Burton, interview.
  2. Civil Service Rules, Rule 31.





eligible. Salary seems to be the main determinant of order of grade. Some of the promotional lines do not seem entirely logical, as, for example, promotion from correction officer to psychiatric social worker. One has the impression from this that promotion rules are more concerned with protection of employees than with development of sound professional service.

Provisional appointments and non-competitive examinations are often problems interfering with the proper functioning of a merit system, as either of these may be used to circumvent the spirit of the law. In the past provisional appointees have often remained in office indefinitely and non-competitive examinations have often been made to fit particular people. During the first four months of 1942, which may be considered a sample period, there were twenty-five emergency appointments and thirteen provisional and provisional temporary appointments in social work positions in the state service of Massachusetts. All the emergency appointments were for ten days each, while the majority of temporary appointments were for three months, with a few for two weeks. Thus, during four months, a total of thirty-eight emergency and provisional appointments were made in the field of social work, and this was during a period of great turnover in employment when one would expect a larger than average number of such appointments. During the two years 1941 and 1942 there were only three qualifying examinations in social work, of which two were for promotion and one apparently for original appointment.<sup>3</sup> It would seem, therefore, that provisional and temporary appointments and non-competitive examinations do not present a serious problem as far as social work in

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3. Monthly reports of the Director of Civil Service, 1941 and 1942.





Massachusetts is concerned.

Veterans' preference has long been a source of concern in Massachusetts to those interested in high standards in Civil Service. Support of veterans' preference seems to have been associated with early opposition to Civil Service itself. The people who originally opposed the Civil Service system were the ones who later supported veterans' preference and other inroads upon the merit system. The Massachusetts law is much more extreme than that of the United States Civil Service Commission and those of most other states. On Federal examinations five per cent additional credit for able-bodied veterans and ten per cent for disabled veterans is allowed. In Massachusetts, any veteran passing a test must be placed at the top of the list, so that a veteran receiving seventy per cent is placed ahead of a civilian receiving one hundred per cent. Disabled veterans must be placed on the list ahead of non-disabled veterans. While the law pertaining to able-bodied veterans applies only to certification, not appointment, the law requires disabled veterans to be appointed ahead of all other people. A veteran who has received a medal of honor may be appointed without examination.<sup>4</sup> Thus, if an able-bodied veteran and two civilians are certified for a position, the veteran may or may not be appointed, but if a veteran is disabled he must be appointed. Of course, if three veterans should happen to pass a test, no one else has much chance. It is difficult for the uninitiated to understand how experience as a veteran would make a person a better social worker, or especially how a person can use a disability which incapacitates him for work as an aid in obtaining work.

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4. Mass. G.L., Ch. 51, s. 21-23.



According to Benson in The Administration of Civil Service in Massachusetts, the number of veterans appointed in Massachusetts increased steadily to 1932 (when his study was made). From 1919 to 1932 percentages of veterans appointed were 24.9 in Federal service, 14.1 in Massachusetts state service, 42.6 in Boston, 27.8 in other Massachusetts cities.<sup>5</sup> In social work alone, percentages were as follows:<sup>6</sup>

TABLE III

Percentages of Veterans Appointed to  
Social Work Positions in Massachusetts  
State Service

<u>Year</u>	<u>%</u>
1925 . . . . .	15.5
1926 . . . . .	14.6
1927 . . . . .	24.5
1928 . . . . .	22.0
1929 . . . . .	37.5
1930 . . . . .	16.7
1931 . . . . .	17.2
1932 . . . . .	25.2

According to Benson, the groups most affected by veteran's preference were inspectors and social workers. During the depression the problem was quite acute, as veterans who lost other jobs turned to civil service and Boston especially put a number of veterans into social work positions.<sup>7</sup> The departments employing mostly women have been less seriously affected, but it has been very difficult for young men to enter the service as the older veterans have secured all the jobs.<sup>8</sup> Theoretically, the six months

5. Benson, op.cit., p. 41.

6. Ibid., p. 40.

7. Ulysses J. Lupien, interview.

8. Flora Burton, interview.





probationary period is a safeguard as the same rules of discharge apply to veterans as to civilians. However, as the probationary period is little used in Massachusetts, it is a weak safeguard.

Actually, of the six social work lists established in 1942, the only one that contained appreciable numbers of veterans was the list for Social Worker in State Aid and Pensions, which contained the names of two disabled veterans, six veterans, one civilian, and fourteen women.<sup>9</sup> In this case, veterans were assured of appointments, but choice of a veteran here does not seem too illogical since the work was to be with veterans. The lists for Supervisor of Welfare Statistics and Investigator of Settlement and Support Claims each had one veteran.

In 1941, only one list contained any veterans, but the other lists were made up entirely of women. The list with veterans was the one for Visitor and Guardian to Older Boys, which contained names of eight disabled veterans, twenty-five veterans, one hundred ninety-two civilians, and one woman;<sup>10</sup> civilians had little chance of appointment unless the list was used a great deal.

One wonders what will happen after this war is over. Will Civil Service become a closed group for veterans only? The Recess Commission on Civil Service<sup>11</sup> has recommended a change in the veterans' preference law, but has suggested that no action be taken while so many people are away serving in the armed forces. The suggested law would provide 5% credit for able-bodied veterans and 10% for disabled veterans, but one cannot help

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9. Monthly Reports of Director of Civil Service, 1942.

10. Ibid., 1942.

11. See infra, p.





wondering how much chance such a bill will have of passing after the new veterans return from service. Bills have already been introduced, proposing new privileges for veterans. Among them are proposals that veterans under twenty-one should not be barred from Civil Service by reason of age; that 5% credit should be given to people who served as civilian defence volunteers; that any veteran shall be eligible to take any civil service examination, despite any provisions of the law to the contrary, within five years of leaving the armed forces. The veterans of the last war are looking forward to old age by proposing a bill prohibiting the setting of age limits on any positions not now having such limits (petition of American Legion). Another bill proposes that no veteran shall be required to pass any physical examination as a prerequisite to appointment to any position in the Civil Service of the Commonwealth.<sup>12</sup> This would certainly provide an interesting contradiction; disabled veterans would have to pass an examination to prove their disability in order to secure extra credit on the examinations, but the others would not even have to take the physical examinations required of civilians.

One of the original purposes of a merit system was to guarantee tenure of office to employees, both for the protection of the employees themselves and for the protection of the state service against complete turnover of employees with every change of administration. In Massachusetts, Civil Service employees have permanent tenure in their positions in accordance with the law:

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12. Commonwealth of Mass., General Court of 1943, Bulletin of Committee Work and Business of the Legislature.



Every person holding office . . . shall hold such office . . . and shall not be removed therefrom, lowered in rank or compensation or suspended, or without his consent transferred from such office or employment to any other, except for just cause, and for reasons specifically given him in writing within twenty-four hours after such removal, suspension, or lowering in rank or compensation.

If the person affected applies in writing within three days, he may have a public hearing before the discharging authority, and later may appeal to the District Court of the Commonwealth.<sup>13</sup> In 1941 there were seventy-nine suspensions for cause in the official service, of which sixty-two were among policemen, firemen and correction officers, and seventeen in "other services". Of these, fifty-two were reinstated in their positions.<sup>14</sup>

It has been stated that the Civil Service system in Massachusetts is more concerned with protection of employees than with providing the best possible public service. According to the report of the Special Commission on Taxation and Public Expenditure of 1937, Civil Service in Massachusetts stresses tenure as its chief objective, while in other states methods of selection are considered more important. Mr. Lupien, Director of Civil Service, maintains that his responsibility is primarily to select the best qualified workers and then to give them protection while they are performing their duties. Which of these statements actually fits the situation at present? The first method by which an employer may protect himself is careful selection of employees. Apparently, the only technique utilized by the state for its own protection at this point is the examination, and the value of this in really selecting the best candidates is questionable. Actually, the examination probably affords greater protection to the candidates

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13. Mass. G.L., Ch. 51, s. 43.

14. Commonwealth of Mass., Annual Report of the Director of Civil Service for the Year Ending Nov. 30, 1941, p. 13.





by providing objective and impartial methods of selection than to the state. Requirements to which any applicant might object are to a large extent prohibited, as, for example, educational requirements and oral examinations, while the state pays its debt to former soldiers by giving great advantages to veterans seeking Civil Service employment. The forms of protection offered to candidates are obviously in direct opposition to the welfare of the state service. Prohibition of educational requirements means that administrators interested in having the most highly qualified staffs must resort to round-about methods to achieve their goal. Limitation to written examinations means that individuals without certain important qualifications necessary to their work may be certified for a position. Veterans' prerogative means, of course, that people with minimum qualifications may be given preference over those with superior qualifications.

Once in office, employees are protected by strict tenure laws and automatic salary increases and can look forward to pensions. The most important methods of protection that any employer has are a probationary period, a method of evaluating the work of employees, and the right to discharge incompetent employees. The probation period is seldom used in Massachusetts, there is no system of service rating, and discharge of employees is very difficult. This author is not suggesting that discharging of employees be made easier, because that would be very dangerous, but surely there could be some happy medium between protection of employer and employee, and surely the welfare of one need not be in opposition to that of the other. If service ratings were used, the probation period would have some meaning and discharge of inefficient employees would be possible.





Although the Civil Service Division is making a great effort to provide the best possible employees for the state service, they are very definitely handicapped by restrictive laws, and until the convenience of candidates is considered secondary to the interests of the service, they will continue to be handicapped. A glance at a list of the bills presented to the legislative committee on civil service in the present legislature shows the stress that is placed on protection of employees.



## CHAPTER VIII

### Comparison of Personnel Practices in Public and Private Social Work in Massachusetts

It would be interesting to compare the standards of public social work in Massachusetts with those of private agencies, though it is difficult to find a common basis on which to make comparisons.

In 1932 the Boston Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers made a study of public and private social work in Massachusetts. At that time it was revealed that, of the private workers, forty-seven per cent were college graduates, while twenty-nine per cent of the public workers were college graduates. Of family welfare workers, sixty per cent of the privately employed and seventeen per cent of the publicly employed were college graduates; among children's workers, the corresponding numbers were thirteen per cent and two per cent.<sup>1</sup> Since in 1932 educational requirements were permitted in the public service, it would be interesting to make similar comparisons for the present when such requirements are not allowed, but when, nevertheless, educational standards seem to be rising. However, such material is not available.

According to a study of the private agencies in Boston published in December, 1939, special training was required of new workers in all but two social agencies in Boston. Four-fifths of the case work agencies required

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1. American Association of Social Workers, Boston Chapter, "A Census of Social Work Positions in Massachusetts," 1932, p. 14.



formal school of social work training, four of these demanding graduates or a two year course.<sup>2</sup> There is no more recent material available on this question, but staff members of the Boston Council of Social Agencies with whom this author has spoken are of the opinion that requirements are even higher now with more agencies requiring Master's degrees in social work (this statement is based on normal conditions and is not applicable to the present emergency situation). Of course, under present laws there can be no such requirement in public social work in Massachusetts, but it remains to be seen whether experience requirements and grading of qualifications can produce similar results. Since qualifications in public social work can vary from one examination to another, no general statements can be made about experience requirements or substitutions.

Security of continuous employment is basic to good performance, but should, of course, depend on satisfactory work by employees. In the 1928-1932 study of the A.A.S.W. it was found that 7.2% of the public social workers and 5.3% of the private workers had been employed over twenty-five years, while 28% public and 20% private workers had been employed over sixteen years. Private family workers had a separation rate of 44%, while public family workers had a rate of 10%; the children's field showed a corresponding ratio of 45% and 9%.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to know what caused these differences or why there was such a large turnover in the private agencies. However, it may be due to the fact that workers move fairly easily from one private agency to another, while mobility is less easy in public agencies.

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2. A.A.S.W., Boston Chapter, "Agency and Worker", 1939, p. 9.

3. A.A.S.W., "A Census of Social Work Positions", p. 7.





At this time, which was during the depression, the public agencies were expanding rapidly and many private workers may have been going into public service while, because of different requirements, public workers are less able to move into private agencies. Whereas public employment carries definite provision for permanent tenure, private agencies have no such rules but ordinarily grant tenure during good performance. Insecurity of tenure does not seem to be a problem among social workers, however; on the other hand, turnover of staff is often a problem to the agencies.

It is difficult to compare salaries in public and private social work, and, because of the difficulties involved, the comparisons may be of doubtful value. The first factor that makes it difficult to compare salaries is the different bases on which the salaries are determined. Public salaries are set by law so that they are definite until the law changes and one does not expect to find deviations from the standard. Private salaries, on the other hand, may change from time to time, from agency to agency, and from worker to worker. Thus figures for private agencies quoted one day may be incorrect the next day, as they are dependent only on what individual agencies wish to pay individual workers. In figuring the range of salaries, the limits may be set by an agency that is an exception in the group. For example, the lower limit of salaries for children's workers is very low, but actually only a few agencies pay such low salaries. Another factor which causes difficulties is the differences in titles of workers; it is not always easy to know which titles in private and public social work correspond to one another. Despite the difficulties and the doubtful value of the comparisons, it is interesting to examine the salaries of the two groups without, however, reaching any conclusions on the basis of figures given



here. Tables IV and V show the salaries of case workers and sub-executives in private agencies, and are reprinted from the June, 1942, report of the Personnel Practices Committee of the Boston Council of Social Agencies. The figures in these Tables were secured from questionnaires sent to agencies. Table VI lists salaries of some of the social work positions in state departments, and these figures are taken from the official listing of the Division of Personnel and Standardization.

Rate of salary increase is probably more important than salary range, and in this respect the public workers have a definite advantage. In public agencies there is a regular annual increase, subject to the approval of the department head, until the maximum is reached. Very few private agencies in Boston have fixed policies of regular increases; only one-fifth of the agencies have fixed salary scales, and this practice is more common in the family case work field than any other.<sup>4</sup>

There are other types of compensation to be considered as well as salary, such as vacations, sick leave, and retirement benefits. According to the 1939 study of the A.A.S.W., the most usual vacations for professional workers in private social agencies are those of one month or of one month with an extra week at another season of the year.<sup>5</sup> In public social work positions in the state, vacations vary according to length of service. A worker employed less than nine months receives one day for each month; from nine months to two years, a worker receives two weeks (eleven working days); up to five years a worker has three weeks (sixteen and one-half working days) and an employee with more than five years of service has a vacation

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4. "Agency and Worker", p. 14.

5. Ibid., p. 16.



TABLE IV<sup>a</sup>

Salaries of Case Workers  
in 34<sup>b</sup> Private Agencies of Boston in 1942

Field	Male		Female	
	High	Low	High	Low
Children's	\$3000	\$1300 <sup>c</sup>	\$2300	\$1085 <sup>c</sup>
Employment and Industrial	2100	1200	2080	1000
Family	2200	1550	2200	1400
Health	--	--	--	--
Medical Social Service	--	2380	2380	1300
Settlements	--	2000	2000	1000
Youth	--	2200	2200	2200

a. Source: Boston Council of Social Agencies, Report of Personnel Practices Committee, 1942, p. 11 (mimeographed).

b. Number of workers: 28 males, 161 females.

c. Seven agencies only report salaries below \$1500. Most of the low salaries were paid in institutions where rate of maintenance was computed very low. For example, this particular salary was actually \$720 in cash with maintenance computed at one dollar a day. A more realistic figure for maintenance would make the salary seem more normal.

Psychiatric case workers are included in children's agencies, medical social service, and family agencies. The A.A.S.W. report of 1938 gives a range of \$2000-2800 for psychiatric case workers.





TABLE V<sup>a</sup>Salaries of Sub-Executives<sup>b</sup>in 59<sup>c</sup> Private Agencies of Boston in 1942

Field	Male		Female	
	High	Low	High	Low
Children's	\$2900	\$2000	\$3250	\$1020
Employment and Industrial	2080	1000	1500	1200
Family	3000	1800	4000	1500
Health	2800	2800	3200	1200
Medical Social Service	2025	2025	1878	1800
Settlements	3900	1200	2500	1000
Youth	4500	1144	3650	1200
At Large <sup>d</sup>	--	--	2500	1900

- a. Source: Boston Council of Social Agencies, Report of Personnel Practices Committee, 1942, p. 11 (mimeographed).
- b. Sub-Executives include many non-social workers, such as home economists, nursery school teachers, etc. (note added by this author).
- c. Number of workers: 63 males, 137 females.
- d. The two agencies in this group are the Boston Council of Social Agencies and the Greater Boston Community Fund.



TABLE VI

Salaries of Certain Social Work Positions in  
the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Title	Salary Range
Social Worker	\$1440-2160
Head Social Worker	2160-2520
Supervisor of Social Service	2760-3300
Chief Supervisor of Social Service	3780-4500
Assistant Psychiatric Social Worker	1380-1680
Psychiatric Social Worker	1680-2160
Worker with the Blind	1440-1740
Senior Worker with the Blind	1800-2280
Investigator of Settlement and Support Claims	1560-2040
Aid and Settlement Agent	1800-2400
Inspector of Settlement and Support Claims	1920-2520
Supervisor of Settlement and Support Claims	2760-3300
Visitor and Guardian to Older Boys	1800-2400

Commonwealth of Mass. Alphabetical List of Titles and Salary Rates for the Personal Service of the Commonwealth, Division of Personnel and Standardization of Dept. of Administration and Finance, corrected to July 25, 1940 (no page numbers).



of four weeks (twenty-two working days).<sup>6</sup> Apparently, the public social worker is less well off than the private one until he has worked several years.

According to the standards presented by the A.A.S.W., a minimum of four weeks sick leave should be granted to workers, but the majority of agencies give from two weeks to one month, usually with extensions if necessary.<sup>7</sup> In the state employ, a worker has fifteen days of sick leave with full pay (a little less than three weeks); however, he has the privilege of accumulating his sick leave up to a maximum of one hundred days, or, if he does not have any accrued sick leave, he may borrow on future leave.<sup>8</sup> The public employee seems to have an advantage in the event of a long illness.

Educational leave is being considered increasingly important by both private and public agencies. Four-fifths of the private agencies, including all but two of the case work agencies, allow time off for study, while tuition is paid by a number of agencies. It is more common for workers to take single courses than to have a full term off for study.<sup>9</sup> Until recently, public agencies did not give much time off for study, but a new policy has recently been announced by the Department of Public Welfare. Time is to be allowed to all workers for early morning or late afternoon courses up to one-half day a week; study in summer schools may be arranged to include the vacation with two additional weeks with pay, while extended leaves for education may be discussed on an individual basis with the Director or the

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6. State Dept. of Public Welfare, Personnel Practices, Effective Dec. 1, 1942, p. 2.

7. "Agency and Worker", p. 14.

8. State Dept. of Public Welfare, op.cit., p. 2.

9. "Agency and Worker," p. 8.





department. In addition, the Department of Public Welfare, in cooperation with the Social Security Board, is offering to a limited number of workers the opportunity to study for one or two semesters with a salary up to \$110 a month. There will be opportunity the first year for three workers to be chosen from supervisors, consultants, head social workers, and area visitors assigned to federally sponsored programs.<sup>10</sup>

Future security is to be considered as part of a person's compensation as well as present salary, and in this respect the public agencies have a clear advantage over the private ones. According to law, all state employees must participate in the state retirement plan. Every employee contributes five per cent of his salary and may retire at any time between the ages of sixty and seventy. At retirement the employee has a choice of two different types of annuity, purchased on a regular life insurance basis, and the state adds a pension equal in amount to the annuity.<sup>11</sup> Only ten private agencies have any sort of retirement plans; two of these are insurance systems with contributions from employee and employer; four agencies have special funds for retirement, and the other four make provisions on a case work basis for continuing salaries. In 1938 the Boston Council of Social Agencies drafted a retirement insurance plan for its member agencies, but this has not been put into practice yet and will probably not be put into practice for a long time because of the great expense involved.<sup>12</sup>

From the viewpoint of security and remuneration, public employment seems to offer more to the average person than private social work employ-

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10. State Dept. of Public Welfare, *op.cit.*, p. 5-7.

11. Commonwealth of Mass., Board of Retirement, Notice of Membership in State Retirement System (flyer distributed to state employees).

12. "Agency and Worker," p. 10.



ment. Public employment offers regular salary increases, assured tenure of office, and security after retirement; no private agency offers all of these. Public agencies are as generous as private agencies with educational leave, probably more generous with sick leave, and almost as generous with vacation. A few people may be able to reach higher salaries in private employment because of the wider salary range, but the average person, especially among those new to the field, is probably more interested in regular salary increases than in the top salary he may achieve some time in the future. The private agency may offer a worker more freedom as it is not strictly limited by law and rule as the public agency is. To many people the extra freedom and opportunity for initiative, as well as the opportunity for a more intensive type of work and for experiment, may compensate for the difference in amount of security. There are those, too, who are not very much interested in security, but prefer the freedom to move easily from one agency to another that they enjoy in private agencies.



## CHAPTER IX

Comparison of Public Social Work in  
Massachusetts with that of Other States

A comparison of Massachusetts social work standards with those of other states may reveal some interesting facts. A Public Welfare Job Study published in 1938 by the American Public Welfare Association has some helpful material on the standards of public social work in certain local and state agencies. In this Chapter, the material taken from that Study will be limited to educational standards of three different groups (selected by this author from among several others). This information was secured by means of questionnaires filled out by ninety-six state workers in five states, twenty-five workers in Child Welfare Services in four states, and forty supervisors and one hundred ninety-five workers in five local units. Table VII shows the educational standards of these groups. It can be easily seen that the local groups do not have as high standards as state groups, though these local groups had the highest standards of such groups. Unfortunately, no figures for Massachusetts are available for comparison with these groups; however, it is interesting to know what the standards are in other places, even though it is not possible to make comparisons.

Comparison of specific positions in Massachusetts with those in other states may prove interesting. The title of Junior Psychiatric Social Worker in California corresponds with the Massachusetts title of Assistant Psychiatric Social Worker, as does the California title of Senior Psychiatric





Table VII<sup>a</sup>

## Educational Qualifications of Certain Groups of Public Social Workers

Amount of Education	Workers <sup>b</sup> on State Staffs		Child Welfare Services		Local Workers in 5 Units <sup>c</sup>			
	Number	Percentum	Number	Percentum	Supervisors Number	Workers Number	Percentum	Percentum
<b>College degree</b>	80	83	25	100	29	73	145	74
Master's degree in social science	17	18			3	8		4
Graduate degree in other field	8	8						
Completed training in school of social work	10	10	4	16	4	10	12	6
Partial training in school of social work	34	35	12	48	16	40	84	43
Bachelor's degree only	11	11	9	36	6	15	41	21
Incomplete college work	15	16			10	25	37	18
Plus social work courses					7	18		
Plus registered nurse							2	1
High school plus R.N.							5	3
High school diploma only	1	1			1	3	6	3
High school incomplete							2	1
<b>Totals</b>	96	100	25	100	40	101	195	99

a. Source: Material gathered from "A Public Welfare Job Study," American Public Welfare Association, June, 1938, pp. 14, 21, 57.

b. There is no indication of what proportion of these are workers, supervisors, administrators.

c. These groups had a history of leadership in public welfare work.



Social Worker with that of Psychiatric Social Worker in Massachusetts. The entrance salaries in California are \$1680 (plus \$15 monthly adjustment, evidently an emergency increase) and \$2040 for Junior and Senior positions, respectively. The corresponding entrance salaries in Massachusetts are \$1380 and \$1680, so that the Junior Psychiatric Social Worker in California receives as much as the senior worker in Massachusetts. Requirements in California are much higher than in Massachusetts. In California the Junior worker must be a college graduate and have completed one year of graduate training in social work while the senior worker must, in addition to this, have one year of experience in psychiatric social work. As has been pointed out already, examinations were given in 1942 in Massachusetts for psychiatric social worker and assistant psychiatric social worker with no entrance requirements at all.

In California, according to the poster announcing the above examination, employees may compete on open competitive tests on a promotional basis, and successful candidates will receive precedence in the department of their employment. Those competing promotionally must receive an overall rating of eighty, while other candidates may pass with seventy.<sup>1</sup> In Massachusetts, promotional examinations may be qualifying, requiring an average of seventy, or may be closed competitive in which requirements are the same as for open examinations.

A recent California poster announces an examination for medical social worker and social case worker in Los Angeles County. The requirements for medical social worker are completion of an approved graduate curriculum in

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1. California State Personnel Board, Announcements of Examinations for Junior and Senior Psychiatric Social Workers, January 14, 1945.





an accredited school of social work with specialization in medical social work (this is unusual; few public positions require more than one year) or graduation from an accredited college, completion of an accredited organized curriculum in social work and three months recent experience in medical social work in agencies or institutions meeting the standards of the American Association of Medical Social Workers. Two years of such experience may be substituted for social work training and each year of college lacking. This is interesting in view of the fact that in Massachusetts education may be substituted for experience but it is the experience that is the basic requirement. Also, in Massachusetts education is substituted for experience year for year, or two years of education for one year of experience, while in California education counts for twice as much. The second alternative of education is not very clear on this poster, as the wording is different from the first and it is not clear whether the social work curriculum must be graduate work or not. The salary for this position is \$130 to \$156 a month and, surprisingly enough, there will be no formal examination, but applicants will be rated on professional training and experience and aptitude and suitability for medical social work as evaluated by investigation and interview.<sup>2</sup> It may be feared that such a method of appointment would eliminate benefits of a merit system, but actually, if entrance requirements are set high, this need not be so because there would not be too many people with the necessary qualifications. As a matter of fact, experience and training and personal qualifications are probably more

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2. Los Angeles County Civil Service Commission, Examination Announcement, Vol. 30, No. 207, December 9, 1942.





significant than ability to pass a written examination. The position of Social Worker as announced on this same poster with a salary of \$125 to \$150 carries a requirement of completion of an organized curriculum in an accredited school of social work (evidently not graduate), or graduation from an accredited college plus at least one year of paid or voluntary experience in supervised social work. One additional year of experience may be substituted for each year of college lacking.

There are no residence requirements for any of these California positions; any citizen of the United States may apply. An applicant for appointment to a Civil Service position in Massachusetts must be a citizen of the United States who has domiciled in the Commonwealth for one year preceding the filing of the application; for a local position, an applicant must have domiciled in the city or town during the six months preceding the filing of application.<sup>2</sup>

Minnesota is one of the states generally believed to have high standards of public social work. The examinations there consist of three parts, written, oral, and training and experience, and failure in any one disqualifies an applicant. The oral examination evaluates the personal qualifications and traits of the applicant in terms of the specific requirements of the position for which he is competing. Non-residents may take the examinations, and their names are placed on the state-wide lists; however, counties may specify special county lists. Lists are good one year, but may be renewed. The County Welfare Merit System defines clearly what is meant by a professionally recognized school of social work, one that is eligible for membership in the American Association of Schools of Social



Work or is serving its probationary period during the time of the applicant's attendance.

In Minnesota, Social Worker I and II, and Child Welfare Worker I and II, and Visitor I and II appear to correspond to Massachusetts classifications of Social Worker. In Minnesota the requirements are higher and the salaries lower than in Massachusetts. All of these positions require college graduation and most require one year of graduate work in social work, but salaries range from \$90 to \$165 per month. Some substitutions of education for experience are allowed with two years of experience usually equaling one year of education. The title of Case Supervisor in Minnesota seems to correspond with the Massachusetts title of Head Social Worker. Here again Minnesota has higher requirements but lower salaries. Requirements are college graduation, one year of graduate study in social work, and three years of full time paid employment in a responsible social case work capacity (in rural counties only two years of experience). Salaries range from \$150 to \$190 in St. Louis County and \$125 to \$175 in rural counties.<sup>4</sup> These positions are county, not state positions, so that salaries are really not comparable to salaries of Massachusetts state jobs.

The state of Montana has recently announced examinations for several positions under Child Welfare Services. Because of the supervision of the Children's Bureau, standards for positions in Child Welfare Services are usually higher than standards for other positions, so that these may not be typical of other positions in Montana. Examinations are announced for five grades of positions with salaries and requirements varying according to the

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4. Minnesota County Welfare Merit System, Announcement Bulletin No. 1, Sept. 9, 1941.





grade. The system of weighting the written examination and the training and experience is different from the Massachusetts system where the weighting is usually experience and training 2, examination 3. In Montana the weight given to training and experience increases as the position increases in importance and authority. On the examination for Junior Child Welfare Worker, the weights are training and experience 4, written examination 6; for Senior Child Welfare Worker and for Child Welfare Consultant the weights are 5 and 5; and for Child Welfare Supervisor training and experience are weighted 6 while the written test is weighted only 4. This seems to be a logical system, as experience is increasingly important as one assumes more authority and supervision over other workers. The veterans' preference system in Montana allows five points for able-bodied veterans and ten points for veterans with service-connected disabilities, while widows of veterans and wives of disabled veterans are also allowed five points. (It is surprising, considering the generosity of the Massachusetts system, that no provision is made for widows and wives of veterans.)

The position of Child Welfare Supervisor requires education equivalent to graduation from an accredited college and successful completion of a two year graduate course in a recognized school of social work (member of American Association of Schools of Social Work), as well as very specific experience including five years in the last ten of full time professional employment in social work of which three shall have been in child welfare, at least two years of supervisory experience one of which shall have been in child welfare supervision. No substitutions are mentioned. Educational requirements are the same for Child Welfare Consultant and Senior Child Welfare Worker, but substitution of one year of experience may be allowed





for only one of graduate study. The Junior Child Welfare Worker must be a college graduate with one year of graduate training in social work. On all the announcements, stress is placed on ability to work with people, knowledge of case work, etc., and there is an oral interview as well as investigation of one's past work. The salary for Junior Child Welfare Worker has a higher minimum but a lower maximum than the position of Social Worker in Massachusetts, and even Senior Child Welfare Worker has a lower maximum than Social Worker in Massachusetts. The salary of the Child Welfare Supervisor in Montana falls between the salaries of Head Social Worker and Supervisor of Social Service in Massachusetts.<sup>5</sup>

Two things that one notices in studying announcements for Civil Service examinations for New York state are the relative weights of parts of the examinations and application fees. On all announcements seen by this writer the written test was given a relative weight of 4 while training, experience and general qualifications were given a weight of 6. Some of the examinations had fees of one, two or three dollars, while others had no fees.

The position of Psychiatric Social Worker may be compared to the position of the same title in Massachusetts. The salary range in New York is \$1800 to \$2300, while the range in Massachusetts is \$1680 to \$2160. Qualifications for the New York job, "by reason of the duties of the position, must include graduation from the two year course in an approved school of social work," either with a definite major in psychiatric work, or a more general training supplemented by a year's experience after graduation in psychiatric social work. The title of Senior Social Worker in New York

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5. Merit System Council of Montana, Circular No. 1, 1943.



appears to correspond to that of Head Social Worker in Massachusetts. The salary range for the former is \$2100 to \$2600, while the range for the latter is \$2160 to \$2520. Requirements for the New York position are college graduation plus five years of experience, or nine years of experience, or a "satisfactory equivalent combination".<sup>6</sup>

The comparisons between positions in Massachusetts and those in other states have necessarily been incomplete, but perhaps they can indicate certain trends. Some of the other states seem to stress qualifications more than Massachusetts, while Massachusetts appears to rely more on written examinations. This fact is shown by the relative weights given to training and experience and to the written tests, as well as by the higher entrance requirements. As far as salaries go, Massachusetts salaries appear to be conspicuously lower than those of California, a little lower than those of New York, a little higher than those of Montana, noticeably higher than those of the Minnesota counties (which correspond more closely with local positions in Massachusetts). It may be pointed out that the writer deliberately chose for comparison states known to have high standards, and this is perfectly true. The purpose of this study is not to see how the Massachusetts Civil Service system compares with all other state merit systems, but how it compares with good merit systems. There are undoubtedly many states that have lower standards than Massachusetts, but since our interest is in improving standards, it is necessary only to know that there are some jurisdictions superior to this. As long as there are some states with higher standards, there is room for improvement in Massachusetts.

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6. State of New York, Dept. of Civil Service, Announcement of State and County Welfare Examinations, May 27, 1939.



## CHAPTER X

### Pertinent Matters in 1945

In 1941 a commission was established to investigate and study the civil service laws of the Commonwealth with a view to making such changes as might be necessary for the best interests of the public. The commission which functioned during the recess of the Legislature was made up of one senator, three representatives and three citizens. This recess commission has presented a long report recommending modification and simplification of the law and the bringing together of all regulations pertaining to Civil Service which are now scattered among the General Laws. They point out that Civil Service in Massachusetts has, until recently, been a "problem child of the state . . . tolerated but never fully developed".<sup>1</sup> They present the following purposes as basic to a Civil Service system:

1. To select employees on the basis of qualification and merit to insure an efficient administration of the public service.
2. To eliminate political influence from Civil Service with resulting security for employees.
3. To prevent discrimination in appointments based on considerations other than fitness to perform duties.
4. To present opportunity for promotion based on merit so that

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1. Commonwealth of Mass., Report of the Special Commission Studying Civil Service Laws, Rules and Regulations, 1945, House Number 1333, p. 5.





careers in public service will attract competent personnel.<sup>2</sup>

The recess commission has recommended several changes in the Civil Service laws, but here will be considered only those pertinent to the subject of this paper. One recommendation is that appointing officers who select applicants not first on the list must state in writing the reasons for so doing. This explanation will be available to the persons passed over.<sup>3</sup> This means that if a person should be passed by several times, he would in each case know why, and an appointing officer would be very careful about passing over people without good reasons. On the other hand, it means also that appointing officers would be even more restricted than they are now in the exercise of their own judgment. There is a recommended change in the process of appeal from discharge, demotion, and transfer. The suggested plan would permit a hearing before the Civil Service Commission instead of requiring the aggrieved employee to appeal to the officer who has already made the decision.

The Commission recommends that Civil Service be extended to the counties with the provision that voters in each county would decide by referendum whether or not to accept it.<sup>4</sup> This would be a great satisfaction to those interested in the merit system, but there will undoubtedly be a great deal of opposition in the Legislature.

Another recommendation of the Commission is that fees be charged for examinations in amounts proportionate to the salary of the position desired;<sup>5</sup> the Director of Civil Service has also made this suggestion. On

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2. Ibid., pp. 2-3.

3. Ibid., p. 5.

4. Ibid., p. 7.

5. Ibid., p. 8.



the surface, this may seem undemocratic, but charging fees for examinations is a well-accepted principle. The real reason for this recommendation, the fact that many students in secretarial and technical schools take the examinations just to test their skill,<sup>6</sup> does not apply to social work. The factor that does apply to the social work, however, is that a large number of candidates fail in the examinations because of the low entrance requirements. It is expensive to give and grade examinations for people who can not hope to pass them, and it is only logical to ask them to share the expense; a fee might also cause people to think carefully before taking a test so that the number of applicants might be reduced. A change is also recommended in the method of determining seniority. The new plan would count an employee's seniority from the original date of employment in his present department rather than from the date of appointment to the present position.<sup>7</sup> The Commission has recommended that veterans' preference be changed as "the public is entitled to the best qualified available person for any job." It is suggested that extra credit of ten points for disabled veterans and five points for others be given to those who attain a passing grade on examinations. However, the committee feels that it is inadvisable to act upon this matter while so many are in the armed services.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the Commission recommends the extension of its own life (it is an unpaid group) for two more years to continue study and prepare perfecting amendments to the law, to further consider the advisability of establishing seniority on an interdepartmental basis, to work with the Civil Service

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6. Ibid., p. 9.

7. Ibid., p. 10.

8. Ibid., pp. 11-12.





Commission in preparation of departmental rules for administration of the law; to recommend a system of in-service training for employees to improve their work and prepare them for promotion.<sup>9</sup>

In this session of the Legislature there are fifty-nine bills to be considered by the Committee on Civil Service. Many of these are very specific bills providing that a particular position in a particular town be placed under Civil Service, but the majority are bills relating to Civil Service as a whole. However, not very many of them affect social work. One petition asks that social workers and clerical workers in certain child welfare services be placed under Civil Service laws; this will undoubtedly be passed as Child Welfare Services are supported by federal grants. Another bill calls for an amendment to the law establishing a merit system for municipal public welfare employees. Four bills are concerned with veterans' preference, and one suggests preference for people who have been volunteer civilian defense workers. Most of the bills are concerned with benefits to employees, such as seniority and tenure.<sup>10</sup>

The Social Security Board has had some influence, and may continue to have more, on personnel standards in public social work. In all parts of the Social Security program involving federal grants it is required:

That the state plan must provide such methods of administration (including after January 1, 1940, methods relating to the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards on a merit basis, except that the board shall exercise no authority in respect to the selection, tenure of office, and compensation of any individual employed in accordance with such methods) as are found by the board to be necessary

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9. Ibid., p. 12.

10. Commonwealth of Mass., General Court of 1943, Bulletin of Committee Work and Business of the Legislature, No. 4, pp. 12-15.





for the proper and efficient operation of the plan."<sup>11</sup>

In 1940 it became necessary, because of this requirement, that all people handling Aid to Dependent Children and Old Age Assistance be put on Civil Service. State employees and those employed by cities and the towns that had accepted Civil Service were already under the merit system, but those in the majority of towns were not. In September, 1940, the so-called "Merit System Examinations" were held. They were qualifying examinations for incumbents who needed only a passing grade (the usual procedure when positions are placed under Civil Service). As the Social Security Board demanded action, and the law did not provide Civil Service procedures for employees of towns, the Commissioner of Public Welfare asked for a "Merit System Examination" until the Legislature could meet in January, 1941. The examinations were conducted by the Massachusetts Civil Service Commission "under the merit system rules and regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Social Security Program". After the examinations were over, a Boston citizen claimed in court that the Commission of Public Welfare had acted beyond his power. This citizen was upheld by the Massachusetts Supreme Court, but by that time the Legislature had met and had passed the necessary law.<sup>12</sup> This law was called an "emergency law necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience".<sup>13</sup> The Social Security Board sets up certain standards for a merit system and they have found the

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11. U.S. Social Security Act (Amended 1939), Title 1, s. 2; Title 2, s. 303; Title 4, s. 402; Title 5, s. 503, 512.

12. Flora Burton (Mass. Dept. of Public Welfare), personal interview.

13. Mass. G.L.



Massachusetts Civil Service laws to be "in substantial conformance" to these standards.<sup>14</sup>

The requirements of the Board are rather general, stipulating that entrance examinations be practical in nature, that eligible lists be kept, that provisional appointments may be made pending examination, that there must be a probationary period for employees, that appointments wherever practical are to be by promotion of qualified people, and that periodic service ratings be made (Massachusetts does not seem to conform to this).<sup>15</sup> It is required that a uniform compensation plan for employees be formulated and this was done for local Aid to Dependent Children and Old Age Assistance workers in Massachusetts in 1942. The Social Security Board issues a draft rule for a merit system to serve as a guide to staff of the Social Security Board in discussing personnel administration with state officials. Apparently, the only real effect of the Social Security program in Massachusetts has been on the Aid to Dependent Children and Old Age Assistance workers in towns. In addition to bringing these workers under Civil Service and establishing a uniform compensation plan, the Civil Service Division and the Department of Public Welfare have recently developed a uniform classification system for them. They have defined the positions for all municipalities, and have set standards for employment which are probably in most cases higher than they have been in the past.<sup>16</sup>

Although the written requirements of the Board appear to be quite general, apparently the representatives of the Board have gone into much

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14. Miss M. Brittingham (Social Security Board), personal interview.

15. Federal Security Agency, Draft of a Rule for a Merit System of Personnel Administration, 1939.

16. Miss Burton.





more detail in working with Civil Service and Public Welfare officials and have suggested specific rules and regulations pertaining to such matters as requirements for positions. This has occasionally created a problem, as some of the suggestions of the Social Security Board, such as educational requirements, are contrary to Massachusetts law.<sup>17</sup>

In any discussion of Civil Service in 1943, it is necessary to mention the present employment crisis. Whereas ordinarily about one-fifth of the names on a list are used, it is now often necessary to go to the bottom of the list before finding anyone who will accept a position, and it is practically impossible to find anyone now who will accept a temporary appointment.<sup>18</sup> Because of this crisis, it has become necessary to take drastic steps. The Director of Civil Service now has the power, for the duration of the war, to extend provisional appointments without time limit until lists can be established or appointment made from an eligible list, to allow temporary transfers without regard for classification, to restrict leaves of absence, to remove from eligible lists the names of people who refuse to accept positions which they have previously signified a willingness to accept, and to exclude from operation of Civil Service laws and rules temporary, war-created positions.<sup>19</sup> These temporary rules will, of course, lower some of the Civil Service standards; for example, many people who ordinarily would not be appointed because of low examination grades will now receive appointments. Some of the old abuses of temporary appointments may appear again, and these new groups of exempted employees may give new opportunity for a spoils system to creep in. However, these are emergency

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17. Major Haworth, personal interview.

18. Ibid.

19. Commonwealth of Mass. Acts and Resolves of 1942, Ch. 13, s 5.





measures and right now the problem is only to secure enough people to keep state services going. Nevertheless, it will be necessary for the Division of Civil Service to act promptly when the crisis is over to return to the old standards, as there will then be a great many people looking for Civil Service jobs.



## CHAPTER XI

### Conclusions

Personnel administration in the public service presents many more problems than in any private organization. In the first place, the size of the agency is a complicating factor as it is much more difficult to select thousands of workers than to choose the few workers employed by most private agencies. Private agencies are not subject to constant scrutiny by the public and the public does not feel a vested interest in private jobs as in public ones; an aggrieved candidate does not have the right of court appeal if a private agency refuses to give him a job; nor do private agencies have to worry about political influence and interference as public agencies do. Thus a private agency can be free to choose any employee who seems to fit its needs, while the public agency must have a system that will grant equal opportunity for all people, that will guarantee an objective, completely impartial choice acceptable to a court of law, and that will make it possible to consider large numbers of applicants. The system developed to meet these needs is the merit system, known in Massachusetts as the Civil Service.

Massachusetts has been a pioneer in the development of Civil Service, and has developed an efficient and workable system. However, there are still many unsolved problems in Massachusetts, as elsewhere, especially in the application of Civil Service to the field of social work. Comparison of the Massachusetts system with that of other states shows that Massachu-



setts offers more and requires less of its candidates for positions than many other states. Many states which give smaller salaries or less advantageous conditions of competition require higher professional qualifications. Comparison of Massachusetts personnel practices with those of private agencies also leads to the conclusion that the Massachusetts Civil Service system offers more security and remuneration but has lower professional standards for employees. Massachusetts does not seem to utilize techniques for protecting the public service as readily as it uses methods of protecting employees and candidates for employment. For example, the probationary period and the service rating which are considered basic to sound personnel practice, public or private, are not used in Massachusetts, while the Massachusetts system of absolute preference for veterans is unique and a definite threat to sound public service. Probably the reason for the stress on security of employees is that groups interested in employee protection are more vocal than groups interested in protecting the public service.<sup>1</sup>

In Massachusetts there must always be three agencies involved in any matter of personnel administration, the Division of Civil Service, the Division of Personnel and Standardization, and the operating department concerned with a particular position. Positions are classified by one division, employees recruited by another, and appointments made by still another.<sup>2</sup> It is the conclusion of this writer that classification could be done more effectively by the Civil Service Division in cooperation with the various operating departments than it is done at present. The Division of Personnel

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1. Supra, Ch. VII.

2. Supra, Ch. V.





and Standardization is concerned only with defining jobs for payroll purposes and not with development of professional standards. The Civil Service Division, on the other hand, has the responsibility for setting qualifications for positions and seems to be the logical agency for classifying and defining these positions for which it sets up requirements; definition of jobs and setting qualifications for those jobs seem to be two parts of the same responsibility. It is felt, too, by this author that the classification system could be modified to assure greater uniformity among the positions with similar titles in different departments, to avoid duplication of titles and to clarify grades and promotional lines.

The method of selecting social workers in a civil service system is a widely discussed topic. It is very difficult to set objective standards for judging ability in social work as social work skills are intangible and can not be easily measured by written tests. Written examinations test knowledge, but there is a difference between ability and knowledge. A good social worker can probably do well on a written examination, but, on the other hand, as Lewis Meriam points out, a person who does well on a written examination is not necessarily a good social worker.<sup>3</sup> Probably in social work, more often than in most fields, training and experience are of greater importance than specific knowledge. This raises the important question of how to judge experience and training. Meriam believes it is important to investigate thoroughly a candidate's experience, professional school record, and references, but this would be a tremendous undertaking if done for all candidates who apply. In Massachusetts, references are investigated and

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3. Lewis Meriam, "Civil Service Testing for Social Work Positions," The Compass, xix:1, pp. 3-6, October, 1937.



experience verified only after names have been certified, though qualifications have been graded along with the written examination. This means that some of the most important criteria are applied only after the greatest majority of candidates have already been eliminated. Perhaps a system will some day be developed for investigating references and experience for all who pass the written tests. The written examination will then be, as it should, merely a preliminary screening to eliminate the obviously unfit.

If greater stress is to be placed on consideration of background, it will probably be necessary to change the system of weighting on examinations and to allow greater weight for experience and training than for the written examination. It will be important to demand high qualifications of candidates. It would be desirable to amend the Civil Service law to permit educational requirements in order to allow the state of Massachusetts to compete for the best workers. It is probably true that well thought out experience requirements with fair substitutions can accomplish as much in raising standards in a given group as educational requirements. However, it is the opinion of this writer that such a system does not attract the most highly qualified people. A person with a good educational background usually looks for a position in which he feels that his education is needed. When an employer accepts his professional training only as a substitute for experience he could have secured without the training, he feels that his education is not needed in that position and he may prefer to look for a position in which his training is recognized. In this way, the public agencies may be limited in the group from which they may select workers. It is also the impression of this writer that at present the best use is not being made of experience requirements; too many examinations have been given





during the past two years with no experience requirements. It is suggested too that uniform standards be established so that qualifications will not vary from one examination to the next. Some effort should be made to relate requirements, responsibility and salary so that the position with the greatest responsibility will have the highest requirements and the highest salary. It will probably also be necessary to use oral examinations which are now barred in Massachusetts. Most writers seem to feel that oral examinations are necessary for social workers and Meriam says that the oral examinations should be graded at least as average, superior, or inferior.<sup>4</sup> Oral examinations are very difficult to administer and present many new problems, such as objective ways of grading, amount of time consumed, skill on the part of the examiners, and avoidance of any semblance of partiality. However, these are problems which may have to be faced and solved and which cannot always be avoided by simply prohibiting oral examinations.

In summary: Massachusetts seems to have a well organized and smoothly running civil service system providing fair competition for jobs and appointments free of political influence. However, in the opinion of this author standards of employment in the field of social work are not as high as those of most private agencies and many public agencies. There are also many problems yet to be solved in the application of Civil Service to social work, and much research and experiment are needed.

It is time for social workers as a group to take an interest in public social work. It is their responsibility as a professional group to set professional standards for all people calling themselves social workers.

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4. Ibid.





The Director of Civil Service is a career man interested in improving the public service. He would undoubtedly welcome help from social workers in setting standards and developing techniques of recruiting and selection.

The recommendations presented as a result of this study are: clarification of the classification system to avoid duplication and to establish uniformity; development of standard qualifications appropriate to the positions and in keeping with the salaries; stress on training and experience rather than written examinations in social work; modification of the law to permit educational requirements and oral examinations; constructive use of experience requirements; modification of veterans' preference; use of service ratings and the probationary period; and finally research, experiment, and constant revision of methods of selection.



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